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CEREBUS WORLD TOUR

CHICAGO
ILLINOIS
AUGUST 12, 1995

(see back cover for details)

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CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
46

196
JUL

CEREBUS
NO. 196 JULY 1995

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer, Characters/ pencil & ink, lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist/pencil & ink, cover colourist, mechanical tones

CAROL WEST
Administrative Assistant

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

DIANA SCHUTZ
Proofreading

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel
•
BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight
•
BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)
Women
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BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 186)
Reads
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BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 187 to Cerebus 200)
Minds

MONTHLY
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Welcome to the Situation Room.

Okay, I had a nice long talk with Milton Griepp co-owner of Capital City about the letter which appeared in the last issue. We've edged over in the direction of an agreement, so I thought I'd let you all know how we stand at this point in the discussions. *We had a follow-up conversation to clarify a few of the points a week later (these appear in italics).*

1. We talked at some length about the Exclusives Mania running rampant through the field. Milton and John are both convinced that if Capital can't get one of the remaining publishers to go exclusive with them that it is unlikely that Capital can keep going in its present form. *Milton would like this clarified so there's no misunderstanding; he is completely optimistic that Capital City* will *survive and that comics will always be an important part of Capital City's business, but thinks a failure to secure an exclusive with some or all of the 'in play' publishers would likely mean that comics (of necessity) would become a 'less important' part of Cap City's business. Obviously, he hopes that this isn't going to be the case.* Milton based his information on his e-mail and weekly reports from the warehouses. The question is largely one of 'will retailers continue to buy from Capital if they can get everything the get from Capital PLUS DC Comics by going with Diamond?' There is a lot of loyalty to Cap City on the part of its retailers, but without a comic-book equivalent of a Gallup Poll to chart retailers' intentions after August 31 (part of Capital City's settlement of their suit with DC is to continue as a DC distributor for July and August) just 'sitting tight' becomes something of a crap shoot. So, much of what I was able to work out could hinge on Image going exclusive with Capital. *Milton asked that I add his observation that he doesn't see an exclusive deal with Image as a 'make-or-break' issue — that a combination of other publishers would serve the same purpose of maintaining Capital's ability to compete with Diamond in the new environment.*
2. Milton expressed a willingness to chart self-publishing as a separate entity in Capital City's Internal Correspondence 'from time to time'. As you might remember from the letter, I was pushing for a new set of categories for the market share pie charts. That was out of the question, but there is some flexibility on the subject of having a special page once every three or four months to chart the progress of self-published titles relative to each other, reorder activity on the titles, etc. Included in this would be a section for retailers to identify regional self-publishing books with potential. Since I've been pushing 'start up' self-publishers to build a local network of stores and not to rely only on their distributor orders to keep their heads above water, this seemed a good way to bridge the gap from regional to national success.
3. I might take a lot of flak for this, but I pushed very hard for the criteria for 'special treatment' for self-published books to be very tight, hinging on reliability and popularity/growth. To qualify for the 'special page' mentioned in point (2) I think a self-publisher should

have shipped his or her last three issues on schedule. Books that did not ship on time could be dealt with separately or not at all. My thinking was this:

a. If the 'special page' is only going to appear once every three, four or (possibly) six months, it is better that it be the 'best foot forward' for self-publishing. A list of two hundred first issues and orders for second and third issues that haven't shipped or possibly haven't been printed or even drawn is just going to emphasize for a prospective retailer that self-publishers are unreliable and amateurish.

b. Making reliability a criteria for access to the 'chart' provides a larger incentive for reliability. It eliminates the excuses that go with a lack of productivity and allows retailers to identify, quickly and easily, those titles that will help them stay in business in this period of uncertainty.

c. It forces self-publishers to be more realistic about their scheduling. Between one appearance of the 'special page' and the next, a book could be recommended by a self-publisher's local retailer and could, subsequently, be on the 'chart' with orders and sell-through numbers for the first two or three issues. This seems fair to me; it's a window of opportunity based on market reaction and reliability.

4. I used the same criteria in outlining a 'safety net' program for self-publishing. The best examples at this moment are Mark Oakley's *Thieves & Kings* and David Lapham's *Stray Bullets*. Both of these guys are going to hit the 'cash-flow wall' soon if they haven't already. Demand for their books is surging but there isn't enough money coming in to publish the new issue and keep the back issues in print. From Milton's stand-point and experience it is easier and more cost effective to move from the periodical to the trade paperback format in reprinting the early issues. *Thieves & Kings* 5 has just come out. It is better from a distribution stand-point to let the early issues go out of print and do a trade paperback of the first four issues around the time that issue 8 ships. There has to be enough of a 'lag' so that stores that have copies of the first four in stock aren't stuck with them when the trade paperback comes out, but not so much of a 'lag' that the current issue is too far ahead of the material in the trade paperback. Milton expressed a willingness to have Capital City pay the printer directly for a trade paperback collection in these situations and to pay the self-publisher the balance owed on his invoice in 30 days. *This was a good example of Milton saying one thing and me hearing another and it took a little while to unravel. Capital City has experimented with such a program in 1992 and 1993 (Milton recalled that there were more examples in the latter year than in the former — as he said 'it was a lousy year for a lot of people'). What they did was to 'assign payment' to specific printers after signing a three-way agreement between Capital, the printer and the publisher authorizing this to be done — essentially cutting the cheque to the printer for the publisher's invoice as opposed to my two-step approach of cutting one cheque to the printer for Capital's share of a print run (i.e. if they got orders for 400 copies on solicitation and the cost per unit of the trade was $1.50 they would cut a cheque to the printer for $600 and, thirty days after delivery, cut another cheque for the 'balance owed' to the self-publisher). There are two very good benefits to Milton's approach over mine; i) it simplifies the bookkeeping and paper trail for the system Capital City has in place, so good for them and ii) it separates the wheat from the chaff for the self-publisher, effectively compelling the self-publisher to produce a larger inventory of his or her trade paperback with the 'paper profits' (i.e. using all revenues from a Capital City order to produce more books, rather than producing a print run 'to order' and hanging onto — or worse, SPENDING — the short-term cash profits), so good for us. I like it.*

a. Obviously I've done some horse-trading here. I'm trying to come up with a compromise between self-publishing freedom and what (from Milton's long experience) is the most effective way to market an extended storyline. I think it is only realistic to take these things into

account. It removes endlessly reprinting the back issues as an option, but I think it's entirely reasonable for Milton to push for what he knows works.

b. It eliminates, at one stroke, the two major 'speed bumps' experienced by self-publishers whose books are successful; having to come up with money to reprint the early issues (you don't reprint the early issues) and having to come up with money to pay for the first trade paperback (Capital City underwrites the cost).

c. It eliminates the burden of decision-making on 'how to keep the books in print', allowing the self-publisher to focus more completely on writing and drawing his or her book.

5. I offered to make recommendations of self-publishers who are reliable and who are getting good market response. I also offered to limit my recommendations to a maximum of one or two titles a month. Milton agreed to this since I have a much clearer picture of what is going on in self-publishing than most. *I forgot to mention this; Milton pointed out that they are willing to try this as an experiment — that it is not some open-ended commitment from now until the end of time. Whether they choose to do this in a small way and then discontinue it or do it in a small way and expand it hinges (obviously) on the results. If they ship the initial order of trade paperbacks to retailers and get enough reorder activity to move the trade onto Hyperlink and soon deplete the self-publisher's inventory of over-printed copies, the success of the program implies a natural expansion. But let me hasten to add that this is Big Picture reality at work — if they attempt this with six self-publishers and only one demonstrates genuine 'breakout' numbers and five trades just sit there or trickle out over six months or a year, the five failures/marginal successes are going to figure more prominently in the fate of the program than the one success — however large that success might be. Capital City is a business and if we want them to change part of the way they do business it's up to us to prove to them that it is worth their while. I repeat, they are a business, not the Goodwill.* This opens me up to the charge of elitism and worse. Damned if I do and damned if I don't. There definitely is not a consensus among self-publishers that reliability is a good thing or a necessary thing. Most believe that have a fundamental right to be unreliable. I'm trying to take the larger view that assisting the momentum of reliable self-publishers will expand the market strength of self-publishing which should benefit unreliable self-publishers by providing a market umbrella and ensuring that their late books will continue to be distributed as part of the cost of doing business. I'm not the final authority — I'll be making recommendations to Milton for books that need help getting over the speed bump, but Milton and John will be the ones making the final decision about who they help and who they don't help. As much as is humanly possible, my choices for books to recommend will be based on market reaction and reliability. I think it would be irresponsible to use any other criteria.

6. We had no discussion of coverage in the Advance Comics catalogue or the publishing of 'sampler's of self-published books that are building momentum. Reading between the lines, my guess is that the Exclusive Deals specify catalogue content in some way — probably a combination of prime display space for a publisher signed to an exclusive and no display space or coverage for non-exclusive publishers. If this is the situation, then Milton can hardly be negotiating away a bargaining chip that would make Capital City competitive with Diamond in pursuing the remaining publishers who are 'in play'. If this is part of the DC/Diamond deal I think it will backfire — giving the catalogues a self-evident 'bought and paid for' look that will only emphasize their desperation to try to recapture lost marketshare. *Milton assured me that this is not part of Capital's program for exclusivity. While there is certainly a program in place for granting more extensive coverage and prime catalogue real estate to those publishers who choose Capital as their exclusive distributor, this coverage would be in ADDITION to the catalogue 'as constituted'. Capital intends to maintain the status quo relative to their coverage of non-exclusive publishers — 'Kool Kat' and 'Pick Hit to Click' designations, etc. Within the confines of their publications,* Internal Correspondence *and* Advance Comics, *Milton expressed flexibility on the question of printing interior pages and such for self-published books Capital City was interested in giving a 'push', but they will have to compete for such coverage with the small, medium and mainstream press. No change there. Since the DC/Diamond deal has not been released publicly (only the spin-doctoring of same) your guess is as good as Milton's or mine as to what the situation will be with* Diamond Dialogue *and* Previews.

7. Assuming the catalogues will soon be a 'closed shop', it becomes more important for self-publishers to promote themselves to the stores directly with advance copies of their first issues sent by mail and (where possible) delivered in person. Lead time is critical. The more months that a store has to let their customers see an advance look at a new self-published title, the more copies they are going to order.

8. Milton thought that it would be impractical to introduce a computer program to chart those self-published books that show 'breakout' potential and thought it wiser to rely on word-of-mouth to latch onto those books with

explosive growth. I don't think I agree with him, but it definitely puts the ball in the court of self-publishers to generate as much interest as possible at the retail level, first regionally and then nationally. *I was a bit too pessimistic on this one, again not really 'hearing' what Milton was saying. He's willing to go back and chart the computer 'profile' of* Bone *or* Strangers in Paradise *— his hesitation came from his instinct that there are as many success 'profiles' as there are successes. Some books sell out on their initial order and then show marginal growth over the next five or six months — if Capital reorders five copies of a book and they sell, that's really all the numbers can show them. There might be a period of three months when it takes a while to sell the five copies followed by a period where five copies are enough, followed by a period when fifteen copies are needed. Still other books can show a lot of growth over three or four months, but 'cap out' (no pun intended) at a specific level of sales. If front-line retailers — on Milton's e-mail and in what they tell the local warehouses — are consistently talking about positive feedback from customers on a specific title, Milton will give this a larger credibility than what a computer print-out will tell him.*

9. The possibility of periodical reorders being added to Hyperlink is being investigated — unfortunately across the whole spectrum of comic books with high demand which makes it unlikely that self-published books would be a high priority. Of course, with the 'safety net' program in place, a reliable self-publisher with favourable market reaction would move quickly from periodicals to trade paperbacks as the primary source of revenues, making a back-issue/Hyperlink connection redundant.

Well, there's where it stands as of May 21. I made a few general observations about my letter to John and Milton when I saw Bill Schanes of Diamond at A.P.E. II in San Jose and told him I would call him later in the week to see if Diamond was interested in a comparable arrangement.

★★★★★★★★★★

Bill Schanes ended up phoning me about an hour before the second phone call with Milton to let me know that he had received the initial letter I had printed last issue and had made some notes on the subject. Of course he's going on the road next week with the Diamond 'New Dynamics' meetings so he wouldn't be able to discuss the letter in any depth until he got back. I told him about the above summary, that Milton was calling with a few clarifications and that once I had it in a form that reflected both Milton's views and my own I would be forwarding it to him (as well as Larry Marder and the Comics Buyer's Guide*). He expressed optimism that Diamond would be interested in some program along these lines and I told him that I was optimistic that something could be put together that would benefit self-publishing and both Diamond and Capital.*

Bill and I talked for a while about his appearance at A.P.E. II (it was a very nice tie — just kidding), which had caused quite a stir, not surprisingly. Several stirs, in fact. Some exhibitors were snarling (as if the Pope was coming to a B'nai Brith meeting), some had dollar signs in their eyes (Colonel Parker's coming to see the show!) and some were just dumbfounded (as if Mick Jagger had walked in on a garage band's rehearsal and asked if they could fake their way through 'Satisfaction' and did they have a spare microphone?). Bill was not unmindful of this and rather seemed to enjoy himself. On the phone he made mention of the fact that he wanted to connect and stay in touch with the small press and was well aware 'some of those guys love us and some of those guys hate us...'

Well, where angels fear to tread.

'Into the teeth of the storm, Bill,' I said. 'Let's talk about Greg Hyland.'

For those of you not aware of the situation, Diamond recently elected to no longer carry Greg 'n' the Boys' book Lethargic Comics *with issue 9. Greg (who is no shrinking violet) took a couple of shots at Diamond on the cover and on the inside front cover. I mean SHOTS! Last issue Diamond is going to put in* Previews*, hey, why not?*

Well, Greg and Bill had, what they call in the diplomacy biz, a 'frank discussion' at A.P.E. II that was frank enough to be overheard for a two hundred meter radius. I wasn't there, but word got around in a hurry and, of course, everyone I talked to wanted to know what I thought of it (or, more likely — this being California and all — what I felt *about it). I told everyone my Andromeda story — how when* Cerebus *was at issue 8 or 9, Ron the Toronto Distributor was at Now & Then Books here in town and Harry showed him a copy of* Cerebus *and said Andromeda should carry it. He flipped through it, handed it back to Harry and said, 'Let me know when he goes to colour.' Well, I was livid. Not only had Andromeda published* Arik Khan *around the same time in black & white, not only had I gotten a bunch of bi-monthly issues out on schedule, but I was ALSO the only Canadian publishing a comic book at that time and here was the guy who CONTROLLED all of Canada's direct market tossing off a snide, 'let me know when he goes to colour.' Jeez, I was mad. But, I didn't phone and I didn't write. I just kept producing the book on schedule and working at getting better and FINALLY around issue fifteen someone phoned from Andromeda to order back issues. No apology (of course), not even the decency of being SHEEPISH about it. But I won, and I KNEW I had won.*

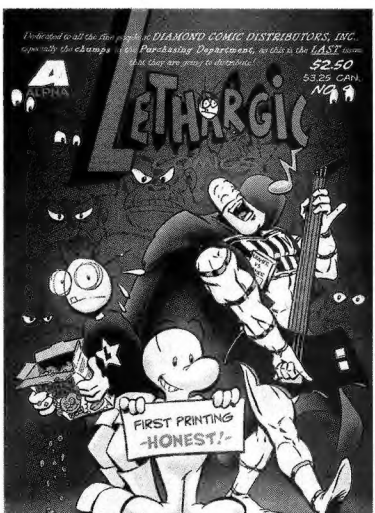
Let me just say that Greg and the boys dropped off my radar screen a while back when they went to Alpha Productions. I remember the book mostly as Lethargic Comics Weakly *— an honest-to-God*

weekly ash-can that impressed me with its raw potential. I mean no offense in saying that they dropped off my radar screen, it's just that I have this thing about self-publishing (like you didn't know that) and there's only so many hours in the day, etc. etc. Well, I read the infamous issue 9 and I liked it quite a bit. The guys have definitely gotten better. The 'Him' interview with Jeff Smith had me in hysterics.

The fact that the guys have gotten this good and their total Diamond order was, like, 250 copies is definitely a shame, but I do think the more appropriate approach was (and is) to decide to prove Diamond (AND the comic-book market) wrong, by generating attention at the consumer and retail level. A lot of the problem is that the audience that would appreciate this book the most won't look at anything that doesn't have a 'number one' on the cover, and certainly won't buy an issue 9 if they can't find the other 8.

There was a comparable situation with Very Vicky, *which Diamond was about to drop. Their orders were down to 104 (Bill remembered the number) and Diana Schutz called to tell him that they had to keep carrying the book, that it was a great book. Bill conceded and Diamond kept carrying the book. The difference in THAT case was that Diana called about a dozen retailers and browbeat them into ordering the book (I haven't met a retailer yet who could stand up to a good Schutz browbeating). The book took off. It's still not up to* Spawn *numbers and it might yet fall below the cut-off where Diamond will decide to cut it because it's costing more than it's bringing in (Diamond, like Capital, is a business — not the Goodwill). My point is that Greg should've taken a comparable action — if he had sent me the latest issue and asked if I could phone a few retailers and get them to order some copies, I definitely would've done it. Okay, it's a little different — John and Jana didn't ask Diana to intervene, Diana did it on her own (and I put in a good word with Bill, too, as I recall). But I really think that attacking the resistance at the retail/consumer end of the food chain is preferable to yelling at the distribution end of the food chain. I know it's tough to ask for help (and I certainly wouldn't go out on a limb for every book where I've sent the creator a 'nice first issue' letter), but there are a lot of different ways to skin a cat).*

It might appear that I'm taking way too much space with this, but it applies so directly to what I'm trying to work out with Diamond and Capital that I wanted to make sure I had the nuances clearly-defined. I don't think it is up to the distributors to generate interest in a title and I don't think it is their obligation to take their profits from, say, the Spawn *toys and use it to finance the distribution of comic books which are losing them money, even if that amount of money is smaller than the tip Steve Geppi left the last time he paid for dinner somewhere.*

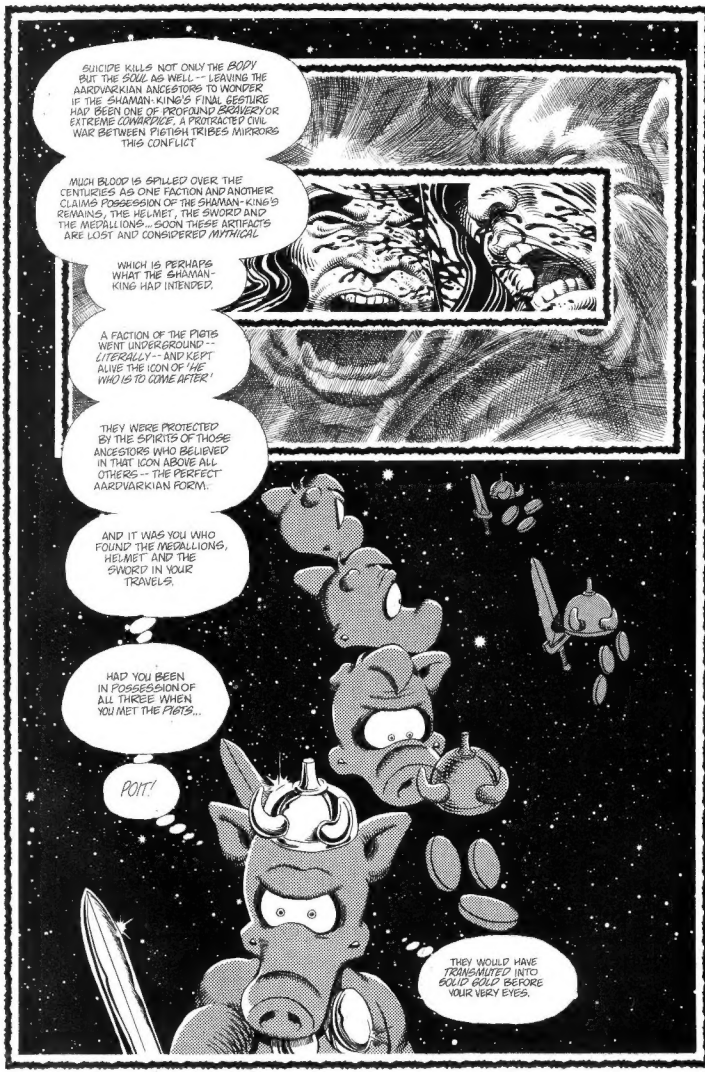

Dedicated to all the fine people at DIAMOND COMIC DISTRIBUTORS, INC.
especially the chumps in the Purchasing Department, as this is the LAST comic
that they are going to distribute!
$2.50
$3.25 CAN.
NO. 9
ALPHA
LETHARGIC
FIRST PRINTING
-HONEST!-
ZERO ILLUSTRATED: "Lethargic Comics is one of the best #3 comics of 1994!"
DIAMOND COMICS DISTRIBUTORS: "We didn't order you out of the box. Here
Illustrated means nothing to us."

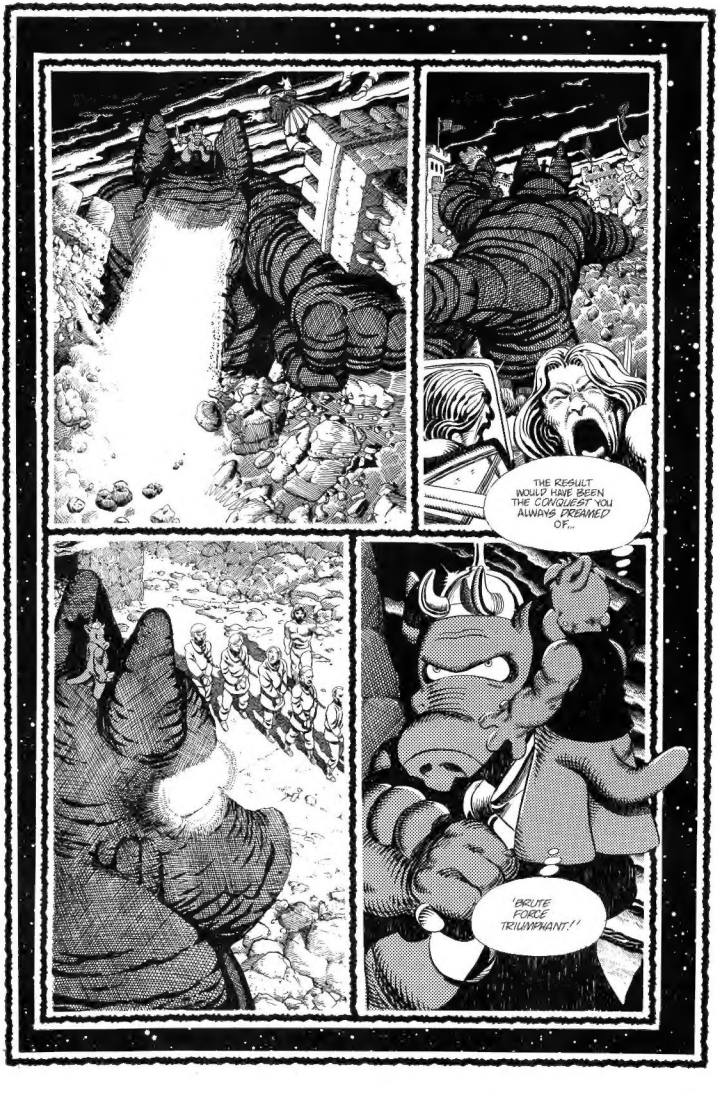
Greg, I think you took the wrong approach. If it's any consolation, you haven't burned your bridges at Diamond. I don't say that because I think Mark Herr or Bill Schanes are touch-feely, warm, compassionate individuals when they think of you or Lethargic Comics. *I say that because the 'business is business' phrase cuts two ways. If you make* Lethargic Comics *into even a modest success and if the word-of-mouth on it is favourable and it gets a solid foothold in the market without Diamond, Diamond will carry issue thirty or thirty-five or forty or your first trade paperback. You'll never like them and they'll probably never like you, but hey...*

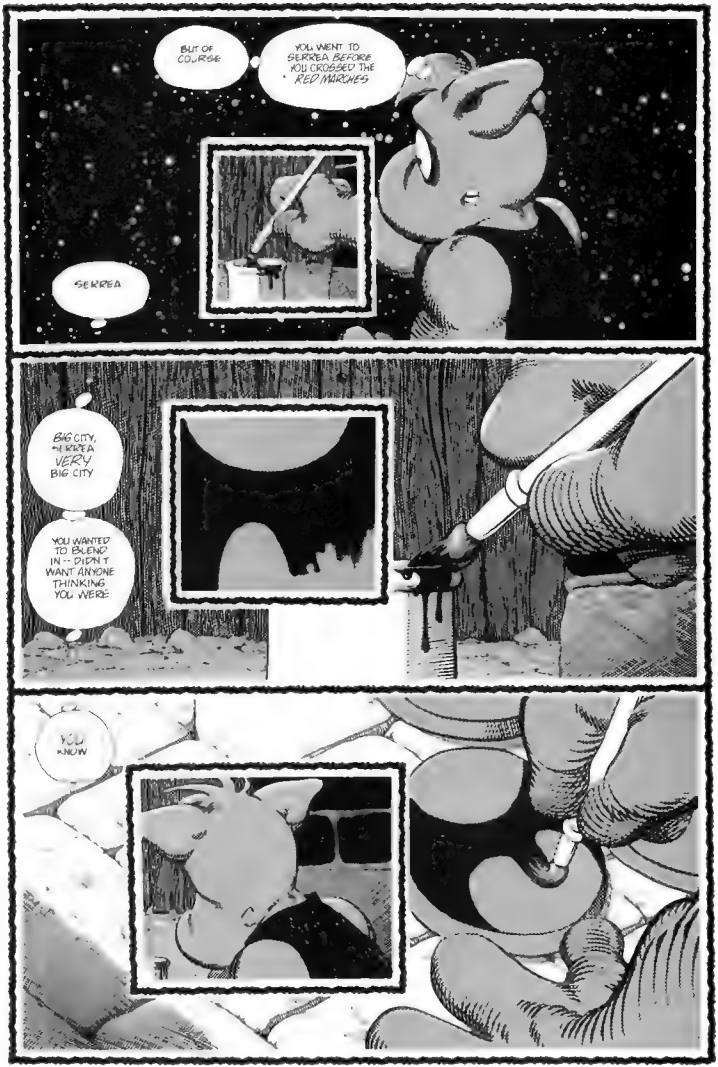
Business is business.

See ad elsewhere in this issue for the Lethargic Store for details on ordering a great book.

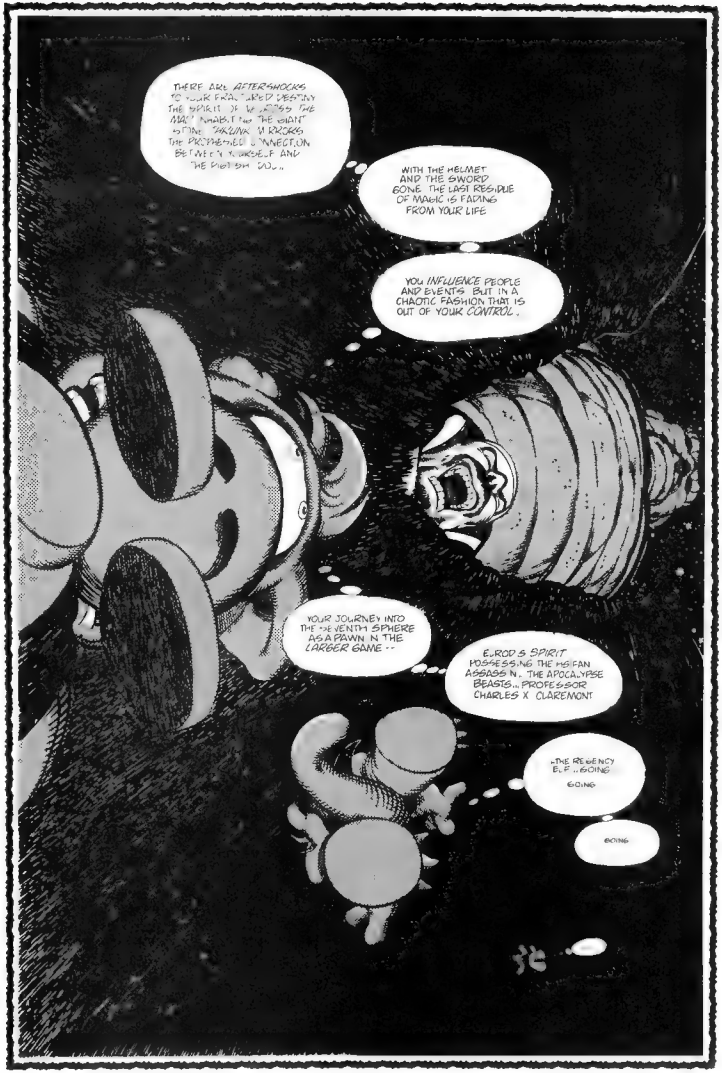
I MEAN,
IT GAVE

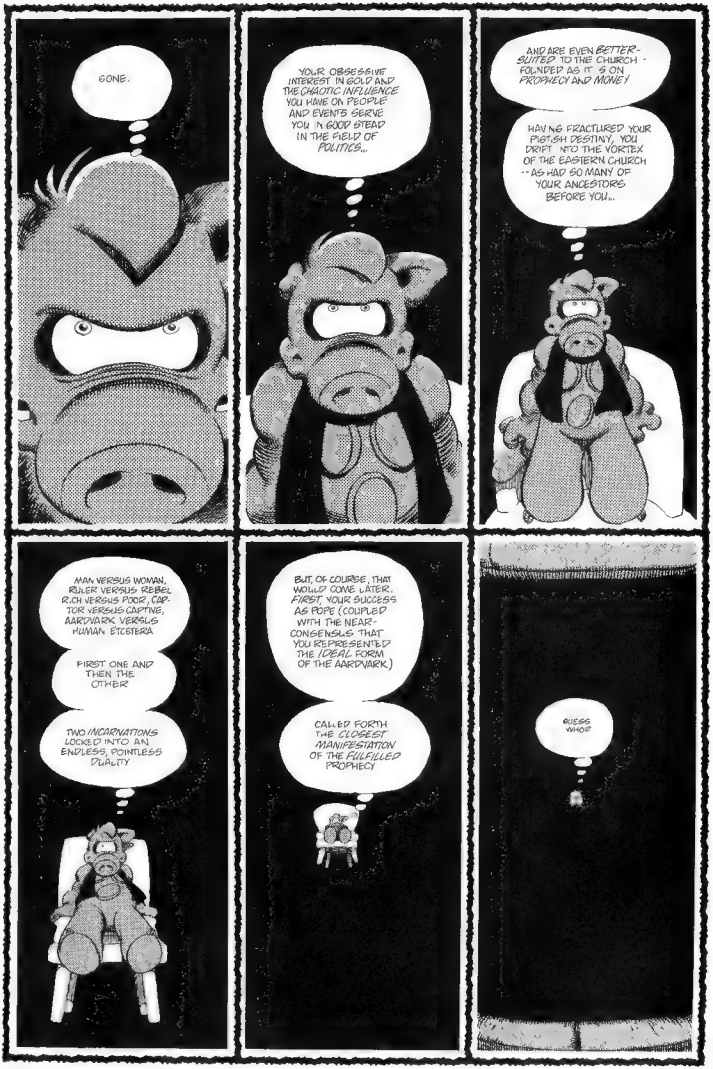

SUICIDE KILLS NOT ONLY THE BODY BUT THE SOUL AS WELL -- LEAVING THE AARDVARKIAN ANCESTORS TO WONDER IF THE SHAMAN-KING'S FINAL GESTURE HAD BEEN ONE OF PROFOUND BRAVERY OR EXTREME COWARDICE. A PROTRACTED CIVIL WAR BETWEEN PIGTISH TRIBES MIRRORS THIS CONFLICT
MUCH BLOOD IS SPILLED OVER THE CENTURIES AS ONE FACTION AND ANOTHER CLAIMS POSSESSION OF THE SHAMAN-KING'S REMAINS, THE HELMET, THE SWORD AND THE MEDALLIONS... SOON THESE ARTIFACTS ARE LOST AND CONSIDERED MYTHICAL
WHICH IS PERHAPS WHAT THE SHAMAN-KING HAD INTENDED.
A FACTION OF THE PIGTS WENT UNDERGROUND -- LITERALLY -- AND KEPT ALIVE THE ICON OF 'HE WHO IS TO COME AFTER.'
THEY WERE PROTECTED BY THE SPIRITS OF THOSE ANCESTORS WHO BELIEVED IN THAT ICON ABOVE ALL OTHERS -- THE PERFECT AARDVARKIAN FORM.
AND IT WAS YOU WHO FOUND THE MEDALLIONS, HELMET AND THE SWORD IN YOUR TRAVELS.
HAD YOU BEEN IN POSSESSION OF ALL THREE WHEN YOU MET THE PIGTS...
POIT!
THEY WOULD HAVE TRANSMUTED INTO SOLID GOLD BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES.


THE RESULT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CONQUEST YOU ALWAYS DREAMED OF...
'BRUTE FORCE: TRIUMPHANT!'

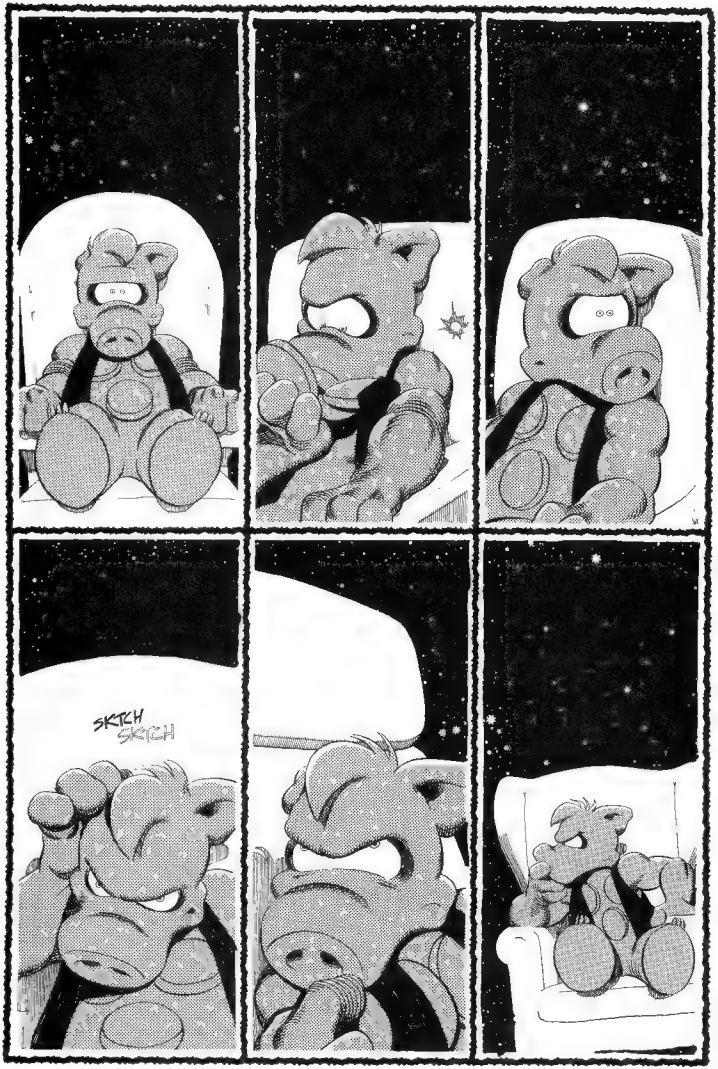

BUT OF COURSE
YOU WENT TO SERREA BEFORE YOU CROSSED THE RED MARSHES
SERREA
BIG CITY, SERREA VERY BIG CITY
YOU WANTED TO BLEND IN -- DIDN'T WANT ANYONE THINKING YOU WERE
YOU KNOW

YOU ARE NOT THE BLACK BLOSSOM. THIS VALLEY A TAL SPAWN WHICH MIGHT START A KI DEEM THE WORD OF THE HELMET
BUT YOUR INVERTED DESTINY ASSERTS ITSELF -- YOUR MERCHANT GUISE AND SO YOU SERVE MERELY AS MAGIC'S CONDUIT FROM MERCHANT.
TO MERCHANT. YOU REVEAL YOURSELF TO YOUR ANCESTORS THOUGH NOT YOURSELF.
HE PORTRAYS TO YOU A 'HIGHER NATURE' RIDING THE WORLD OF MAGIC IN THE NAME OF STABILITY
YOUR HIDDEN NATURE IS REFLECTED IN THIS SECOND MERCHANT
YOU LOSE THE SWORD
HOARDING GOLD -SIMPLY FOR THE SAKE OF HOARDING GOLD
ELROD AND THE ROACH BECOME NESCAPABLE MANIFESTATIONS OF YOUR INADEQUACIES AND FAILED NATURE


THERE ARE AFTERSHOCKS TO YOUR FRACTURED DESTINY THE SPIRIT IS WEAKENED THE MAGIC DIMINISHED THE VOICE OF TIME SHRUNK TO A WHISPER THE PROPHESIED CONNECTION BETWEEN YOURSELF AND THE SYSTEM DOWN...
WITH THE HELMET AND THE SWORD GONE THE LAST RESIDUE OF MAGIC IS FADING FROM YOUR LIFE
YOU INFLUENCE PEOPLE AND EVENTS BUT IN A CHAOTIC FASHION THAT IS OUT OF YOUR CONTROL.
YOUR JOURNEY INTO THE SEVENTH SPHERE AS A PAWN IN THE LARGER GAME...
ELROD'S SPIRIT POSSESSING THE NEFAN ASSASSIN.. THE APOCALYPSE BEASTS.. PROFESSOR CHARLES X CLAREMONT
THE REGENCY E.F.. GOING
GOING
GONE


GONE.
YOUR OBSESSIVE INTEREST IN GOLD AND THE CHAOTIC INFLUENCE YOU HAVE ON PEOPLE AND EVENTS SERVE YOU IN GOOD STEAD IN THE FIELD OF POLITICS...
AND ARE EVEN BETTER-SUITED TO THE CHURCH - FOUNDED AS IT IS ON PROPHECY AND MONEY!
HAVING FRACTURED YOUR PIGLISH DESTINY, YOU DRIFT INTO THE VORTEX OF THE EASTERN CHURCH -- AS HAD SO MANY OF YOUR ANCESTORS BEFORE YOU...
MAN VERSUS WOMAN, RULER VERSUS REBEL, RICH VERSUS POOR, CAPTOR VERSUS CAPTIVE, AARDVARK VERSUS HUMAN ETCETERA
FIRST ONE AND THEN THE OTHER
TWO INCARNATIONS LOCKED INTO AN ENDLESS, POINTLESS DUALITY
BUT, OF COURSE, THAT WOULD COME LATER. FIRST, YOUR SUCCESS AS POPE (COUPLED WITH THE NEAR-CONSENSUS THAT YOU REPRESENTED THE IDEAL FORM OF THE AARDVARK.)
CALLED FORTH THE CLOSEST MANIFESTATION OF THE FULFILLED PROPHECY
GUESS WHO?

BRAN MAC M.F.N RECOGN.ZED THE ARTIFICE OF THE MAN.FESTATION
YOUR DESTRUCTION OF THE FETISH IDOL HAD CALLED FORTH A TRAVESTY OF THAT IDOL IN HUMAN FORM
HAVING CHOSEN TO HAVE FAITH IN YOU-- INSTEAD OF THE ICON-- BRAN SAW SUICIDE AS THE ONLY HONOURABLE RECOURSE OPEN TO HIM.
N THE ABSENCE OF THE GENUINE IDOL, IS IT POSSIBLE THAT NECROSSY THRUNK MIGHT HAVE FULFILLED SOME PART OF YOUR FRACTURED DESTINY?
THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING, REALLY.
IS THERE?
A BIT LONG WINDED AS ANSWERS GO, BUT THERE YOU HAVE IT...
THAT'S
'EXACTLY'
WHAT THOSE DAMNED THINGS ARE.


SKTCH
SKTCH

OH GO ON
SAY IT
IF YOU'RE AS POWERFUL AS YOU SAY YOU ARE
YOU COULD MAKE JAKA LOVE CEREBUS
'THAT' WAY
URANUS
OH, YEAH?! LISTEN! IF YOU WANT TO--

SORRY, COULDN'T RESIST THAT ONE.

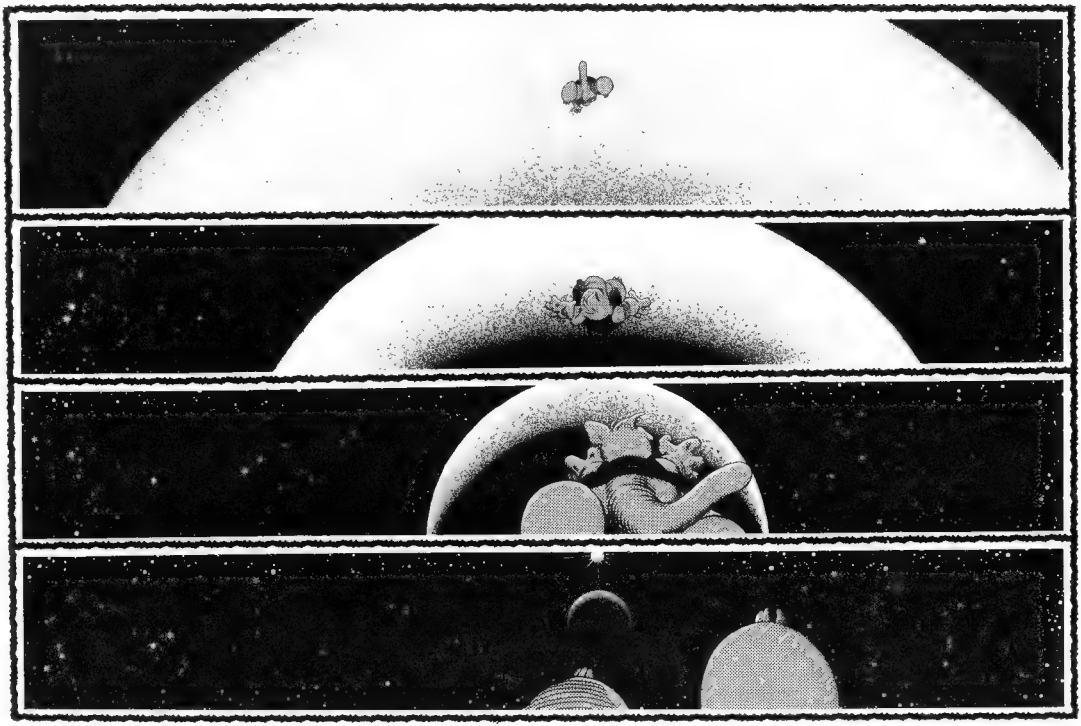
LIKE ANY GOOD HUSBAND AND SON.

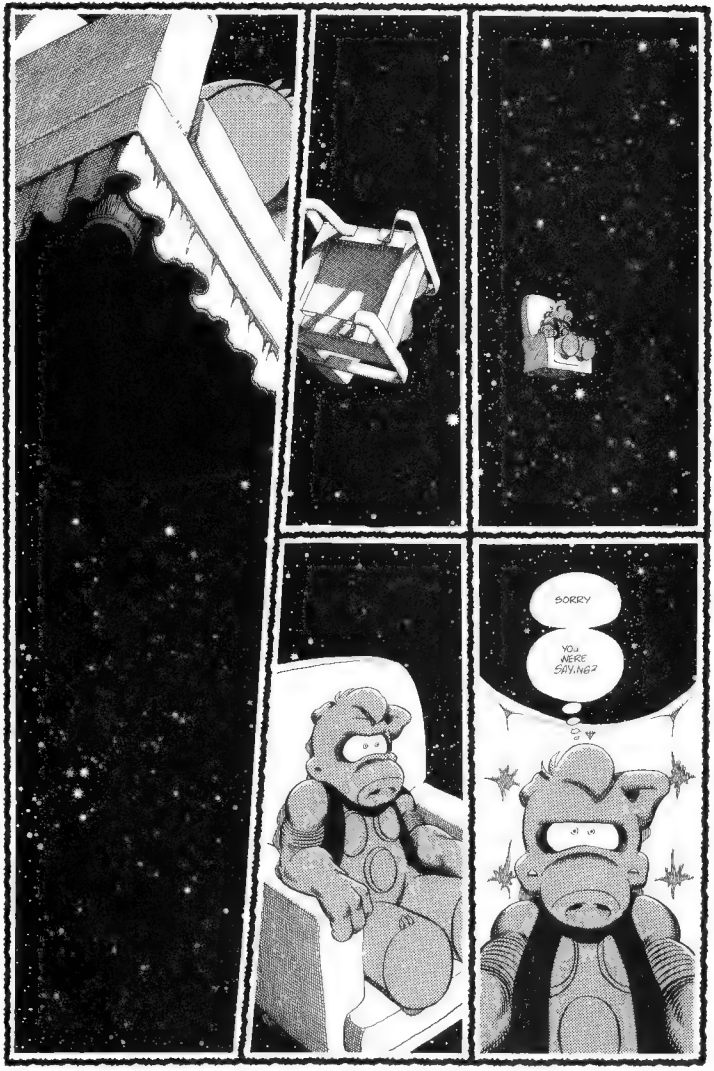
BLAND AND FEMINELESS.

IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY URANUS WAS HUSBAND AND SON TO GAEA MOTHER EARTH.

SEVENTH FROM THE SUN.

URANUS? "THE HEAVENLY ONE" OR "THE SPHERES OF THE GODS"...




SORRY
YOU WERE SAY.NG?

YOU COULD MAKE JAKA LOVE CERBERUS THAT WAY
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'RE INTERESTED IN HEARING ABOUT HON THE SHAMAN-KING'S MISTAKE WAS IN SEEKING THE IDEAL AARDVARKIAN 'FORM' WITH NO REGARD FOR THE IDEAL 'NATURE'--? A MISTAKE GROUNDED IN HIS BLIND BELIEF IN ICONOLATRY.
MAY
OR HOW THAT SCHISM BETWEEN SURFACE NATURE AND SUBSTANTIAL NATURE IMPLIED THE INEVITABILITY OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN YOURSELF AND SERNA -- LOCKING THE TWO OF YOU INTO A FRUITLESS ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE WHETHER MALENESS IS A NATURE OF SUBSTANCE WHILE FEMALENESS IS A NATURE OF SURFACE OR VICE-VERSA? INEVITABLY YOUR RESPECTIVE GENDERS -- YOUR GENITALIA - BECAME ICONS TO YOU, OBSCURING THE... uh ...LARGER CONTEXT OF... um AARDVARKIAN... uh
AARDVARKIAN NATURE NULLIFYING THE ...LARGEST, UNRESOLVED QUESTION OF WHETHER TWO AARDVARKS CAN PRODUCE AARDVARK OFFSPRING ARE... uh ARE AARDVARKS POTENTIAL MUTATIONS? OR
IS THE HISTORICAL PERCEPTION OF THEMSELVES AS uh SPONTANEOUSLY GENERATED ABBERATIONS uh

YOU CAN SKIP THE PICTURES TOO CEREBUS ISN'T
OH I THINK YOU'LL BE INTERESTED IN THESE PICTURES
THESE PICTURES AND THESE WORDS
SHHHHH
YOU'RE READING THE SECOND INSTALMENT OF VICTOR LIDDY'S BLOOD FOR MY COUNTRY!
JAKA IS READING THE FOURTH INSTALMENT OF LINDA MEDLEY'S 'CASTLE WAITING'
!
YOU'VE BEEN MARRIED FOR A YEAR AND FIVE MONTHS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS:

I.C.E. '95

(INDEPENDENT COMICS EXPO)

- JIM VALENTINO
- LARRY MARDER
- EVAN DORKIN

and more!

SEE BACK COVER AND INSIDE BACK COVER FOR DETAILS

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA:

PITTSTOP!

UNIVERSITY CENTER HOLIDAY INN

- DON SIMPSON
- BILL TUCCI
- MARK OAKLEY

and more!

SEPTEMBER 9, 1995
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Verus clarusque sim

I am pleased that Aardvark Comment has again fallen, if rather haphazardly, onto serious philosophical grounds. J. Hagey's and your comments were intriguing, rather insightful, but also somewhat incorrect.

I. J. Hagey states:

A.1. "Many may argue that philosophy died, and rightly so, with Wittgenstein's *Tractatus.*"

This assertion, while definitely opinion as you have pointed out, is also quite incorrect. Wittgenstein himself became dissatisfied with the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* during his hiatus as a primary-school teacher. Upon his prompt return to philosophy, his "extreme version of Logical Atomism was the first thing that he repudiated" (Kenny, Anthony ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Western Philosophy.* Oxford UP: New York, 1994. 259). The *Tractatus* itself posits a kind of mysticism, hardly a proper end to philosophy. Wittgenstein writes, "(6.432) God does not reveal himself in the world. (6.44) It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists. (6.4312) . the solution to the enigma of life in space and time lies outside space and time" (Palmer, Donald. *Looking At Philosophy: et al.* Mayfield Publishing: Mountain View, 1994. 321).

2. "Certainly the derivative bodies of Bertrand Russell's logical positivism and Sartre's existentialism are no more illuminating, and they did nothing to revive metaphysics (which is probably for the best)."

Furthermore, associating Bertrand Russell with the logical positivist movement in such a way as to imply he is its founder is rather irresponsible. The *Tractatus,* the works of Gottlob Frege as well as Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* were indeed most influential in starting the "Vienna Circle" of logical positivists. Russell himself, however, was neither directly associated with the group, nor did he actively exhort logical positivism. His philosophy changed throughout his life, but is commonly described in terms of his Logical Atomism, which preceded logical positivism. Indeed, Russell lived long enough to see the death of logical positivism.

Russellian logical atomism states that any sentence can only be understood when the reader is familiar with all the designated objects it contains. These objects must also correspond to independent atomic facts that either hold a singular characteristic or link two or more particular characteristics. Wittgensteinian logical atomism asserts that sentences can only be analyzed in terms of "atomic facts," objects that cannot be broken down any further and are pictorial in nature. The positivists asserted that all claims must be subject to the Verification Principle. That is, all claims must be either verifiable or falsifiable through experience. However, one wonders how it is possible to verify the Principle itself. This encompassed most of the positivist debate until the Vienna Circle's demise in 1939. All this, as you can see, has less to do with metaphysics and more with epistemology.

As above, Sartre's metaphysical analysis of life — form precedes essence — has by no means closed metaphysics. Besides, there are many determinists who would argue with his claim.

3. Finally, I must point out that

MESA, ARIZONA:

GATHERUM '95

MESA SHERATON
CENTENNIAL WAY

- JAMES OWEN
- TERI S. WOOD
- B.C. BOYER

and more!

OCTOBER 14, 1995
Please Note Changed Date
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

KITCHENER, ONTARIO:

SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE

WALPER TERRACE HOTEL
KING & QUEEN STREETS

- DAVE SIM & GERHARD*
- MARK OAKLEY
- STEVE BISSETTE

and more!

DECEMBER 3, 1995
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**we'll be at the other three as well.*

many people said about physics at the end of the previous century what J. Hagey has said about philosophy. In lieu of Newtonian mechanics and Maxwellian electromagnetics, it was widely believed that physics was a dead subject, that anyone could predict the outcome in any circumstance by merely applying Newton's and Maxwell's equations on more and more complicated levels. Students at the university level were steered into engineering, the practical application of physical principles, or into completely unrelated areas such as zoology, which was gaining momentum after the Darwinian revolution. In fact, it took Albert Einstein and the photoelectric effect to revive theoretical physics and turn it into the explosive field it is today.

Post-modern philosophy has taken a decidedly analytic stance. With the advent of such analytical theories as semiotics and hermeneutics, philosophy has almost as much in common with literary criticism, or vice versa, as it does with its varied past. We have come to the realization that there are fundamental limitations with language itself that prevent us from even making meaningful statements in many instances, such as your reply to Hagey, for instance. This by no means heralds the death of the discipline.

B. "But is it not in this realm of ideas, where fact and opinion do not exist, that you wish to speak?"

The proposed dichotomy between ideas and facts and ideas and opinions does not appear to make sense. G.E. Moore, a colleague of Russell who was and is still widely criticized for his "common sense" view of analytical language, would ask the immortal question: "BUT what do you MEAN, exactly?" Thought is composed of ideas. That statement appears to be a necessity by definition: for if it is not, "ideas" must be redefined into whatever new sense it is being used in. For example, if an idea cannot consist of a fact, then it cannot be true. That in itself is not a problem. Indeed, many have argued such a claim. However, Hagey continues by asserting that an idea cannot consist of an opinion either. Now, opinion is neither true nor false. It is only belief. This commits him to the contradiction that thought, being composed solely of ideas, consists neither of truth nor conjecture, which has the possibility of truth. All thought, then, must be false, as that is the only remaining choice. But if all thought is false, then his own words are not true, and have no meaning.

C. As a co-author of the *Comics Journal* article in question, Hagey shares a measure of responsibility in its failure. He and his associates spent much of the article criticizing your colleagues for not criticizing you about your beliefs, but reserved very little space for actually refuting your claims themselves.

II. Mr. Sim, you present a complex series of arguments in issue #192 as a means of clarifying ideas presented in *Reads* to J. Hagey. I will not concern myself with the latter. The former, however, contains both a contradiction and a paradox. Also, in the context of a philosophical debate, you state without proof or argument that causality is necessary.

A. "You are a proponent of thought as a structural system having more in common with, let us say, jurisprudence than art... Opinion on other people's thoughts to me are not thoughts. Perhaps what we are describing in a roundabout way is the distinction between scholarship and insight. It is possible that you see the two related, judging by your words (my opinion)."

The logical implication based upon what you wrote both in 192 and 186 is that your own words, as opinion, have no real meaning. The following is a logical progression. The lines marked with stars indicate statements you have expressed to be true in either of the previously mentioned issues. The others are commonly assumed to be a *priori* facts.

(1.01) truth excludes opinion *
(1.02) thought can be true
(1.11) true thought excludes opinion *
(1.12) truth excludes opinion

(2.01) art can assert true thoughts
(2.02) art expresses insight *
(2.03) art is perceived
(2.11) study implies perception
(2.12) formal study is scholarship
(2.21) scholarship excludes insight *
(2.22) study excludes art
(2.23) art excludes perception

(3.01) true thought requires knowledge
(3.02) knowledge requires perception
(3.03) knowledge excludes art

Therefore all statements about art are vacuous and mere opinion. Additionally, no perceiver can ever have knowledge of any work of art's intent, and these words have no meaning.

Let me rule out any confusion by explaining further. First, however, let us define some terms. *Knowledge* here is positively asserted, true, justified belief, according to the standard definition. In other words, you must truly believe, with justification, a statement you affirmatively assert to be true that is indeed true. *Opinion* is merely positively asserted belief. It bears no contingency to truth. In all occurrences, *Art* can be replaced with work, painting, picture, text, et cetera. That is, a labor of any kind. *Perception* refers to any act of seeing, reading, touching, tasting OR thinking. Reading, after all, requires thought, as does recognition of sense data.

Here is the argument. You argue in *Reads* that it is better to think than to feel an expression of truth. Your discussion of it is lengthy and need not be repeated here. As for criticism, we can save the epistemological discussion for other texts and simply say that opinion is ambiguous and therefore can never make any expression of truth. This may at first appear incorrect. After all, have you never held true opinion? Recall our definition of opinion, however. A pure and true positively asserted opinion here is not true. If such a belief is true, then it is knowledge, not opinion.

Your statements in 192 about jurisprudence versus art, insight versus scholarship and interpretation of art clearly commit you to the claim that insight is present in art. That is, when you write *Cerebus*, and Wittgenstein the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, you both intend meaning. Therefore, when we look at or read any work and are perceiving it in our elevated sense, we are attempting to find the insight, the ideas or something. We are thinking about it on some level, and when we think about or study a work, we must perceive it, obviously. But if, as you say in 192, any serious study or scholarship excludes insight, then we cannot really perceive art, or any work, at all. Statements (2.03) and (2.23) are contradictory.

(3.01) is obvious and true according to our original definition of knowledge. Knowledge of a thing is itself contingent upon our ability to perceive the thing somehow. Thus, we can have no knowledge of art because we cannot even perceive it. But bear in mind that art here can mean literature. Thus, all the above statements commit us to a logical paradox. If our argument is true, you have never perceived it! Your work, as it expresses your ideas, actually expresses nothing. This is obviously a gross contradiction. Both words and pictures must have meaning in order for anyone to understand what they express. *(Dave, maybe now you know why, after 3 years, I dropped out of graduate philosophy! –Diana)*

B. "...it simply isn't POSSIBLE that there is no direct cause and effect."

In asserting the necessity of causality, indeed by capitalizing "possible," you have neglected a major aspect of philosophy. David Hume, Scottish sceptic, created the classic arguments introducing the Problem of Induction, or that there do not exist causal synthetic statements. In other words, there are no necessary EMPIRICAL connections between any two events. No matter how many times the ball drops when you let it go, there is nothing inherent in that simple system that necessitates that the ball will do so when dropped again. In his refutation of empiricism, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant offers empirical data's contingency on space and time as a synthetic *a priori* truth. Whether this was an effective rebuttal is, of course, the subject of other texts.

III. The problem with yours and J. Hagey's comments is that neither of you is expressing anything other than meaningless, tautological statements. I do not wish to criticize in the pejorative sense. I am only seeking clarification and would be happy to continue the debate.

Rick Possett
510 Inwood Drive
Norman, OK
USA 73072

I'm not sure if I can distill what I was saying much further, but it does seem to be worth the effort. I suppose it comes down to the value you place on opinions in and of themselves. My experience as the creator of the *Cerebus* story line has led me to the inescapable conclusion that creativity creates opinion — or, perhaps more accurately, triggers opinion. 'All statements about art are vacuous and mere opinion.' Is 'mere' a suitable adjective in the context? I would agree that it is, so long as it is not used as a pejorative. I remember Harlan Ellison saying once that it is inaccurate to say that 'everyone is entitled to an opinion.' He amended the assertion to 'everyone is entitled to an INFORMED opinion.' All well and good on the surface, but who is to judge what opinions are 'informed' and what opinions are 'ignorant'? Everyone's world view is constructed differently from the same raw materials. There are scraps of dialogue from plays and movies that recur with great frequency in my conversations. To others, they're just scraps of dialogue. I read too much into them. Well, which is true — or True? Are they important or unimportant? To me, they're important. It is immaterial to me whether they're important to others, immaterial to me that they might have a different importance to still others. The prevalence of the expression 'I feel...' (and the extent to which it has replaced 'I think...') is a good example and one which I was pleased to call to everyone's attention in issue 186. To an emotion-based sensibility I'm splitting hairs. 'I feel' or 'I think' — what's the difference? Big difference to me, little difference to some, no difference to most. People will take that piece of information and make of it what they will. Those who recognize what I was saying — recognize it in the way I intended it (i.e., a society which expresses itself most often with the words 'I feel' rather than 'I think' has taken a seriously wrong turn) — do not have a uniform reaction. The minority fragments into still smaller minorities. 'Dave's right — we need a balance of emotion and reason' (I don't share this opinion; where emotion and reason are given equal weight and value, reason doesn't stand a chance in my view). 'Dave's right — television news has turned into voyeuristic titillation' (in my view, the cart is before the horse; television reflects but did not create the societal situation of emotion being given more credence than intellect). Do you see what I'm saying? A lot of

people disagree with what I'm saying, and their interpretation of what I'm saying isn't what I'm saying — and the same holds true for those who agree with what I'm saying. Most often their interpretation of what I'm saying isn't what I'm saying.

Each individual interprets information and opinion. Each individual has different mental files. One takes a statement and puts it in the information file. Another takes the same statement and puts it in the opinion file — or the falsehood file.

'Serious study' and 'scholarship', to me, are acts of creativity. Someone could write a 500-page book on *Cerebus*, interpreting it, speculating on my motivations. The entire readership could decide that that book clearly defined *Cerebus* and its author. Does it? If they think it does, then it does — for THEM.

I think what all scholarship and study attempt to do is to manufacture a consensus. It doubtless offends the sensibility of the scholar to point this out, but what other purpose is there to scholarship? It's a popularity contest. Who is the biographer/analyst/documentarian who is most *widely perceived* to have defined a creator or expression of creativity? Whose interpretation is the most popular with those who find value in interpretation? Which interpreter's interpretation sold the best, was made into a movie, was excerpted in *Vanity Fair*, was reviewed most favourably by the *New York Times*, was the lead story on *Hard Copy*? Popularity contests to determine veracity and/or merit.

To me, it's still an individual reaction. Some people read *Cerebus* and see nothing there of veracity or merit. Others... well, let's just say they can be a bit *excessive* in their approval. To say that the truth lies somewhere between the two extremes is to pursue consensus to the point of neurosis (in my view) and to needlessly rule out of order, with no just cause, the view that *Cerebus* is completely without merit. And to needlessly rule out of order the more excessive approval, likewise without just cause.

★★★★★★★★★★

Hey, Dave.

Wow, the adrenaline is still pumping.

I was at the Academy of Music in beautiful downtown Northampton on April 9, 1995.

You were there too, as were Neil Gaiman and Messrs. Kitchen, Kaluta, and Zulli. A veritable wet dream for the discerning fanboy. The occasion was, of course, Neil's Guardian Angel Tour. What a treat to see it wing its way so close to my corner of the world. And what a treat to attend the reception at the Words and Pictures Museum following Neil's readings and Q&A session. Here are some thoughts from the balcony...

Cheers to your introductory speech. In truth, I was expecting a laff-a-minnit intro complete with Colorful Neil Anecdotes and surprising but somehow pertinent references to The Bottle City of Kandor. After a few seconds of disappointment at the low guffaw quotient, I realized it was an entirely appropriate presentation. Before we were swept away by Neil's stories, we needed a reminder of What It All Meant: namely, the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund and the truckloads of money you all were trying to raise. The reasons for the CBLDF dovetail nicely into the current Spirits of Independence campaign. Let's face it, the independent books push the envelope and the buttons and, as such, lie vulnerable to any attacks from your local Concerned Citizen. It's very easy to take *THB, Strangers in Paradise* and the rest for granted. It's also very easy for Paul Pope and Terry Moore, whose pockets aren't deep enough to tangle in court for two decades, to be censored into oblivion. We must stay ever-vigilant and give 'til it hurts. If you and the other creators are fighting in the trenches, then we, the fans, must continue to buy the war bonds.

On a lighter note, the reception following Neil's presentation was pretty damn amazing. I didn't bring any items for signing (not even a pen). I thought it would be a low-key gathering to give fans the opportunity to eat, drink, and chat with the guests without the assembly-line pressure and hectic spirit of a convention signing. I brought a camera and nothing more

Imagine my surprise when a horde of fans showed up with novels, prints, and comics. Imagine my admiration when all of you continued to engage the crowd in lively conversation while legibly writing your names. Imagine my utter shock when you and Neil (and Michael Zulli) not only signed whatever was placed in front of you and spoke at length with several fans, but actually did sketches...! Neil and Michael surrendered early on, but you continued drawing Cerebus heads (on "autopilot", as I recall), "Elrod bunnies", and "Cerebus trees" until everyone was sated. I, uh, didn't get one. I already own a piece of signed original art (page something-or-other of issue #150, when Cerebus is about to cut his throat) and I figured, hey, some of these younger tykes probably blew their wad buying tickets to the affair, so why not let them get a free piece of Dave's pie (or something like that).

I did, however, bring that camera. Enclosed are a few photos from the reading and the reception; I thought you might like a memento (other than writer's cramp, that is). If you want to print one in *Cerebus*, fine. If you want to toss 'em in the wastebasket, that's fine too.

I guess that's it for now. Please get the gang together and do this again sometime soon. It really was a unique and fun experience. See you in Vermont in July.

Best,

Michael Dobosz
63 State St.
Shelburne Falls, MA
USA 01370

It was a lot of fun being Neil's 'warm-up act'. My first time on stage in a real theatre, so it took me a few minutes to adjust to connecting with the giant black void with headlights in front of me. Had to take it as an article of faith that there were people out there. The Words and Pictures Museum reception was one of those 'lose-lose' propositions. If I told people that I wasn't doing autographs or sketches, I'd come across as 'arrogant and aloof'. By standing there signing everything, I took a few shots about my 'entourage' and 'holding court'.

Ah, fame.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave and Gerhard,

Greetings from rainy Southern California. Congratulations on *Minds*. It's proving to be a *very* important episode in the life of our gray little friend. I first picked up *Cerebus* in a small comic-book store for a quarter each. The three issues I bought were the last three issues of *Church and State*. I had no idea what the fuck was going

on, so I set them aside and went on collecting Marvel trash.

Towards the beginning of June of 1993, I had completely stopped buying Marvel. With the recommendation from books like *Sandman* and *Grendel*, I picked up the issue of *Women* with Jaka on the cover. Fascinated, I saved up loads of money and set out to the San Diego Comic Con, hoping to buy loads and loads of *Cerebus*. Within just a few hours of arriving at San Diego, I had amassed every "phone book" from *Cerebus* to *Melmoth*. Wandering towards the snack bar, whom should I spot sitting next to the equally talented gentlemen from *Lethargic Comics, Weakly* than *the* Dave Sim!

Grabbing a handful of *Lethargic* comics, I found myself face to face with this enigmatic man, whose comic I had only read four issues of, but by whom I was already entranced. Muttering something about how much I had enjoyed what I had seen of your work, I handed you the issue with Jaka on the cover, as well as *Cerebus* #0. I felt quite ignorant, being unable to come up with anything the least bit intelligent to say, so I thanked you for the signatures and the head sketch and went on my miserable way.

Well, almost two years later, I've read each "phone book" at least six times, and turned seven of my friends on to *Cerebus*. So the reason I'm writing this letter, besides wanting to try out my new fax machine in my computer, is to ask if you're planning on coming to at least one day of San Diego this year. I talked to James Owen last year, and he said something about you and the management of the Con having a disagreement. Since none of the Spirits of Independence stops are near California, you coming to even just one day would be wonderful. Not just for me and my Diamondback packs that are screaming for your signature, but also for my friends and others who would finally be able to put a face with the comic.

If you are planning on attending, let us know in Aardvark Comment as soon as possible. If not, would it be too late to schedule a SoI stop down here? Besides the possibility of attracting new readers, we need something to distract us from the commercialized crap that's being spewed out as "independent" comics.

Thanks,

Matt Smylie
141 Calle Constancia
Redlands, CA
USA 92373

Sorry, Matt. I won't be at the San Diego Con. I haven't had a disagreement with the organizers; I just don't see any great value in the 'one big happy comic-book family' events for myself or self-publishing. It seems every time I'm having a good discussion with someone, right at the critical point in the conversation, someone will come up from a gum-card company or something, and there I am having to explain why I don't want to do *Cerebus* gum cards or an Italian translation or a *Cerebus* movie... or it'll be someone in the vast comic-book bureaucracy that I met five years ago, and there I am nodding my head like an idiot while they explain WHY they left Voyager and went to Malibu and turned down DC's offer and where they plan to go when they quit Wizards of the Coast. Yech.

A Spirits stop in San Diego is another matter entirely. Batton Lash has always been one of my favourite people and he's certainly proven himself to be a reliable and popular self-publisher with *Wolff & Byrd* (oh, shut up, Batton — you are *too* popular).

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Aardvark Comment.

On Thursday 27th April 1995 the UK Home Secretary announced that he was referrng the case of Sarah Thornton to the Court of Appeal, following representations from her legal representatives. She had been convicted of murder and given a mandatory life sentence in 1990.

Married for just ten months, she had taken a kitchen knife and stabbed her husband Malcolm to death while he slept. Prior to her conviction, the jury heard (and plainly thought little of) evidence that she was of unsound mind resulting from domestic violence at the hands of her husband. He was awaiting trial on charges of assault on her when he was killed.

Feminists began campaigning on Sarah Thornton's behalf even before she was convicted. In 1992 they won an appeal, citing fresh evidence of his 'provocation', which mitigated, they said, her lethal attack on him. The appeal was unsuccessful.

The new appeal has been granted without fresh evidence. It's the first time mere 'representations' have sufficed.

Sarah Thornton's supporters state publicly that she should never have been convicted. They reason that if a man can be said to have beaten his wife, he deserves to die at her hand, and she deserves acclaim rather than censure or punishment.

The Home Secretary's announcement shows how dangerously close we are to a true New Matriarchy in which any homicide of a man will be justifiable so long as it's committed by a woman, because her life is intrinsically more valuable than his.

Yours against all Sexism,

Sean Goldthorpe
129 Trumpington Road
Forest Gate, London
E79EG England

P.S. Excellent comic, Dave & Ger. With you till #300.

Let me tell you, if that's an example of a patriarchy in action, it is one limp dick of a patriarchy.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave Sim:

Re: Printing of Mini-Comic in *Cerebus*

Allow me to introduce myself: my name is Adam Denton, Vice President of Sabre's Edge Associated Studios. I'm writing to thank you for printing *Ennui*, the mini-comic that I made in preparation for the Austin stop on the Spirits of Independence tour. It was a special treat, because the day I found out about its inclusion in the latest issue of *Cerebus* happened to be my birthday. Needless to say, it was a great birthday present. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Adam Denton, Vice President
Sabre's Edge Associated Studios
2617 3rd Ave. So., Apt. #5
Minneapolis, MN
USA 55488

P.S. If you have any other comments about any of our other minis, or our first book *Scuttlebutt*, feel free to drop us a line. We're planning on going to all the American stops on the tour, so see you there.

Everyone send Adam a dollar for a copy of *Ennui*. Pretty please? He's a good lad.

★★★★★★★★★★

CHARLES VESS'

BOOK OF BALLADS AND SAGAS

A

CEREBUS

PREVIEW

Before self-publishing started gaining its recent prominence — back in the ancient and long-lost days of 1994 — Steve Bissette told me that Charles Vess had called him, asking about self-publishing. This came as something of a shock to me, since I had always known Charles as one of the Studio Residue guys (this is by no means a pejorative — I myself am Studio Residue and proud of the fact). The coming together of Berni (now Bernie) Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, Barry Windsor-Smith and Jeff Jones in the short-lived Studio was a seminal event in the mid-seventies (in comic-book terms, an age falling somewhere between the death of the dinosaur and the birth of homo erectus). To me, Neal Adams was Elvis and the Studio guys were the Beatles, raising the question: who is your favourite Studio guy? Like most musicians (post-1964) the descending order of preference went a long way towards identifying stylistic preference and career ambition and direction. Charles, to me, always fell into a space between Mike Kaluta (who was his roommate in Manhattan for a number of years) and Berni Wrightson. His subject matter (classic fantasy themes with a decided preference for 'wee people' and elaborate renderings of landscape elements) was Kalutaish (Kalutaesque?), while his composition and execution tended to be Wrightsony (Wrightsonoid?). And not the mid-to-late-seventies 'pooled shadows', post-*Badtime Stories*, pre-*Frankenstein* Wrightson, but rather an extension of the *Web of Horror*, 'Nightmaster' (how the hell did Joe Orlando get *this* through DC?), Frazetta-wannabe-but-not-quite-there Wrightson. Which effectively moved him from this side of Wrightson to the other side of Wrightson and away from Kaluta into the Dave Stevensy/*Johnny Comety*/ scratchy Al Williamsony area (which, if you'll recall from my introduction to the *Strangers in Paradise* preview, is not really my cup of tea).

In a larger context, this also took him away from the Wrightson *Badtime Storiesy*, Christopher Enterprisey, Gorblimey Pressy context into the rarefied 'artists aren't good businessmen I just wanna draw leave me alone and don't rip me off too bad' context (wide open country, indeed). Of course, this led him to drawing the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' job as part of *Sandman*, which script just happened to be by Neil Gaiman, who, through happenstance or design (one suspects the former), just happened to write the perfect story for the sensibilities of someone who was Kaluta-like in terms of subject matter and landscape, and Wrightsonish in terms of composition and execution, and BAM! right there in the middle of one of the pages I saw it — BWS FACES! BWS FACES! And not the Conan-Red-Nails blobbed-hatch BWS faces — 'The Beguiling' '...let me tell you of *my* love' BWS faces.

Well, you can imagine my surprise.

These are usually 'one-of-a-kind' occurrences: disparate elements melding perfectly after the fashion of planetary alignments. All things being equal and trajectories being what they are, it would've been my guess that Charles would follow the success of 'Midsummer' in a straight line out from the confluence of Wrightson/Kaluta/BWS (under the influence of Neil's Butterfly Gravitational Pull) into... something. Something freelancy, artsy, 100-pound vellumy, overpricey, critical acclaimy, what nexty?

Well, you can imagine my surprise.

Because, as the following pages indicate as clearly as the nose on anyone's face, Mr. Vess (or Charlie as I like to call 'im) has managed (with a slight detour through the asteroid belt I foresaw and leaving his options wide open for another try at same) to encompass and contain all of the elements intrinsic to his style and his nature which made 'Midsummer' such an absolute joy and to take them even FURTHER and DEEPER within their own context (and his), with spectacular results.

Clearly, this is an experiment. Not in a creative sense. No, no. In a creative sense, this represents the bringing to fruition of many years of 'trial and error', seeking after a voice and now finding it, setting fire to water and freezing the air around it for all time. The experiment is with the likelihood of there being a *market* for such work. This is the creative core, the heart's desire, the gold at the end of the rainbow, to be sure. The only open question is: is it also pearls before swine? (No offense is intended by this — it is asked not out of aggression but, rather, out of the fear of misplaced optimism and the possibility of Charlie being wounded by caring too much.)

His writing partners share his deep affection for the subject matter; in the first three issues you'll find Neil Gaiman ('The False Knight on the Road'), Jeff Smith ('The Galtee Farmer'), Elaine Lee ('Tam Lin') — familiar names to comic-book cognoscenti. Less familiar names to our little group: Sharyn McCrumb, Midori Snyder, Delia Sherman, Ellen Kushner, Elizabeth Willey, Emma Bull, Terri Windling, Lee Smith, Jane Yolen.

Mr. Vess can't permit himself to think beyond the initial six-issue series. I feel safe in saying that the six *Books of Ballads and Sagas* will be an immaculate addition to the comic-book world, in print in many editions in the years to come.

When I consider just how many ballads and sagas there are that Charles Vess *could* draw, I can't *help* but envision the territories untravelled *beyond* the six-issue series. I can only urge all of you to assist in burying him up to his eyeballs in currency so he won't be tempted for ONE SECOND to head back out to the asteroid belt.

Charles Vess' Book of Ballads and Sagas will be available in October. Advance copies are available for $2.95 U.S. (plus .75 postage and handling) from Green Man Press, 10518 Rich Valley Rd., Bristol, Virginia 24202.

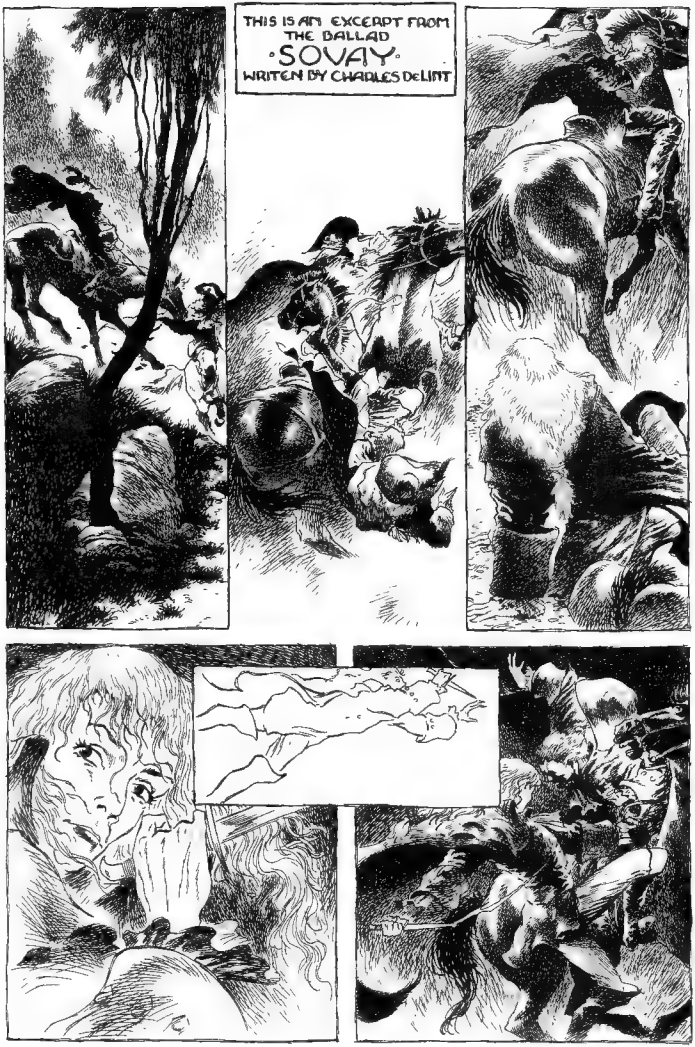
"TRUE THOMAS LAY ON HUNTLIE BANK,
A MARVEL WITH HIS EYE SPIED HE.

THERE HE SAW A LADY BRIGHT,
COME RIDING DOWN BY THE EILDON TREE."

THOMAS the RHYMER

© TEXT BY SHARYN McCRUMB + ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES VESS·94

I AM THE QUEEN OF FAIR ELFLAND AND AM HITHER COME TO VISIT THEE.
NOW YOU MUST COME WITH ME AND IN ELFLAND SERVE ME FOR SEVEN YEARS.
AND AFTER THAT TIME IS UP I'LL LET YOU RETURN TO YOUR HOME WITH POWERS BEYOND THAT OF OTHER MORTALS.


THIS IS AN EXCERPT FROM THE BALLAD
•SOVAY•
WRITEN BY CHARLES DeLINT

"...LOUD THE WIND WAS HEARD TO SOUND AND AN EARTHQUAKE ROCKED THE FLOOR."
AND THIS PAGE IS FROM
·KING·HENRY·
WRITTEN BY JANE YOLEN

SISTERS, LISTEN! YGGDRASILL TREMBLES AND MOANS UNDER THE BURDEN OF THE GOD SHE BEARS.
SISTERS, LISTEN! AGAIN YGGDRASILL SUFFERS GREATER HARDSHIPS THAN HE REALIZES.

NIDHOGG GNAWS ON HER ROOTS IN NIFLHEIM.
WORMS BURROW INTO HER TRUNK AND FESTER.
THE DEER CROP HER CROWN.
HER WOUNDS ARE DEEP AND ETERNAL.
SISTERS, SHE IS DYING! WOUNDED BY WODEN HIMSELF!
THE FOOL!
HE DRAWS THE LIFE FROM HER BREAST.
YGGDRASIL
THE LIFE THAT SUSTAINS ALL LIFE.
SISTERS, I IMPLORE YOU... GRANT ME YOUR COUNCIL...

DO YOU KNOW MORE NOW OR NOT?
IN MY DREAMS, I SAW BALDUR DEAD...
MIDHOGG FREE... FIMBULVETR, THE WINTER WITHOUT END, THROTTLED MANAHEIM IN ITS GRIP... I SAW WAR... THE SUN AND THE MOON WERE SWALLOWED UP... I SAW...
I SAW MY DEATH...
AXE TIME, SWORD TIME, ERE THE WORLD FALL. WIND TIME, WOLF TIME, DO YOU KNOW ALL?
RAGNAROK! OH, MOTHER... MUST THE WORLD PAY FOR THE SINS OF ITS GODS?
WHAT MUST I DO? TELL ME... BATTLE MIDHOGG?
ENJOIN KING LODUR TO RAISE MANAHEIM TO ARMS?
NO. RAGNAROK BEGINS WITH NEITHER GODS NOR KINGS.
IT BEGINS WITH A SINGLE SOUL.
IT BEGINS WITH A GIRL.
SKADE...

Skade
WRITTEN BY ROBERT WALTON
ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES VESS
UMMM...

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I.C.E. IN AUGUST!

THE 1995 INDEPENDENT COMICS EXPO

RADISSON SUITE HOTEL O'HARE AIRPORT

5500 North River Road, Rosemont, Illinois 60018
Telephone (708) 678-4000 • Fax (708) 928-7659

The hotel is located at I–90 and River Road on the Chicago Rapid Transit line. Just one mile from O'Hare International Airport with 24-hour complimentary transportation to and from the airport. Connected by skywalk to O'Hare Exposition Center, a short distance from the Rosemont Horizon Arena.

'THE BALLROOM'

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 12, 1995 • 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Once again, the local liaison and Retailer du Jour are one and the same (Larry's spending most of his time in L.A. these days). Having been to the hugely-successful self-publishers' signing at Chicago Comics prior to the Capital City Big Idea trade show at the beginning of May, I have to say that these guys are on the cutting edge of the new direct market:

CHICAGO COMICS (Attn: Kurt or Eric)
3244 N. Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois 60657
phone: (312) 528-1983 • fax: (312) 528-1979
internet: chicom@mcs.com

If you are interested in having them display copies of your book at their table or you want to send a batch of flyers to be handed out at the admissions table, send a sample copy of your book to the above address or a package of flyers marked 'Chicago Comics, re: Independent Comics Expo '95'. They carry a VERY wide and eclectic mix of comics in their store (including minis), so they are good people to make contact with (plus they throw a hell of a party).

★★★★★★★★★★

The event is being held at:

THE RADISSON SUITE HOTEL O'HARE AIRPORT
5500 North River Road
Rosemont, Illinois 60018
phone: (708) 678-4000 • fax: (708) 928-7659

It is an all-suite hotel (i.e. bedroom and living room) and the rate is $120 a night which is a little pricey so we've got a list of hotels and motels on the O'Hare 'strip' that have a nice range:

two miles **west** of the Radisson:

Ramada O'Hare (original site of the Chicago Comicon)
6600 N. Mannheim Rd.,
Rosemont, IL 60018
(708) 827-5131

Best Western at O'Hare
1030 W. Higgins Rd.,
Rosemont, IL 60018
(708) 296-4471

TravelLodge O'Hare
3003 Mannheim Rd.,
Des Plains, IL 60018
(708) 296-5541

one mile **north** of the Radisson:

Holiday Inn O'Hare
5440 N. River Rd., Rosemont, IL 60018
(708) 671-6350

1-1/2 miles **north** of the Radisson:

Clarion Int'l O'Hare
Quality Inn at O'Hare
6810 N. Mannheim Rd.,
Rosemont, IL 60018
(708) 297-1234

one mile **south** of the Radisson:

Motel 6
9408 W. Lawrence Ave.,
Schiller Park, IL 60176
(708) 671-4282

★★★★★★★★★★

Steve Bissette will be doing his 'Journeys into Fear' slide show again to benefit the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund ($3.00 admission charge). That will be set up in Salon B at the Radisson. I'll be doing the introductions again and the show starts at 5:30 p.m.

★★★★★★★★★★

As usual, Ger and I will be hanging out in the hotel bar at the Radisson the night before (after Bissette's slide show) and the evening of June 12. The show closes at 4 p.m. so everyone can figure out where they want to go to rustle up some food and then meet back at the lobby bar for conversation, jam-sketching, etc.

★★★★★★★★★★

A limited number of tables are still available for the remaining shows:

September 9 – PITTSTOP (Don Simpson, Bill Tucci and more)
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Pittsburgh, PA
Holiday Inn University Center
100 Lytton Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA • (412) 682-6200

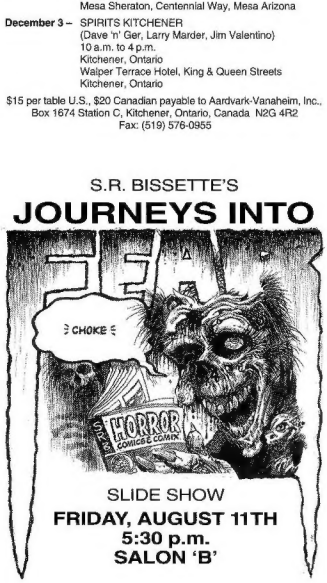
October 7 – GATHERUM '95
(James Owen, Teri S. Wood, B.C. Boyer)
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Mesa, Arizona
Mesa Sheraton, Centennial Way, Mesa Arizona

December 3 – SPIRITS KITCHENER
(Dave 'n' Ger, Larry Marder, Jim Valentino)
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Kitchener, Ontario
Walper Terrace Hotel, King & Queen Streets
Kitchener, Ontario

$15 per table U.S., $20 Canadian payable to Aardvark-Vanaheim, Inc.,
Box 1674 Station C, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2
Fax: (519) 576-0955

S.R. BISSETTE'S

JOURNEYS INTO



SLIDE SHOW
FRIDAY, AUGUST 11TH
5:30 p.m.
SALON 'B'

WINDY CITY I.C.E.

INDEPENDENT COMICS EXPOSITION

SATURDAY AUGUST 12, 1995

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Paul Fricke
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and many, many more!

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For more information call Steve Harold 708-285-9475

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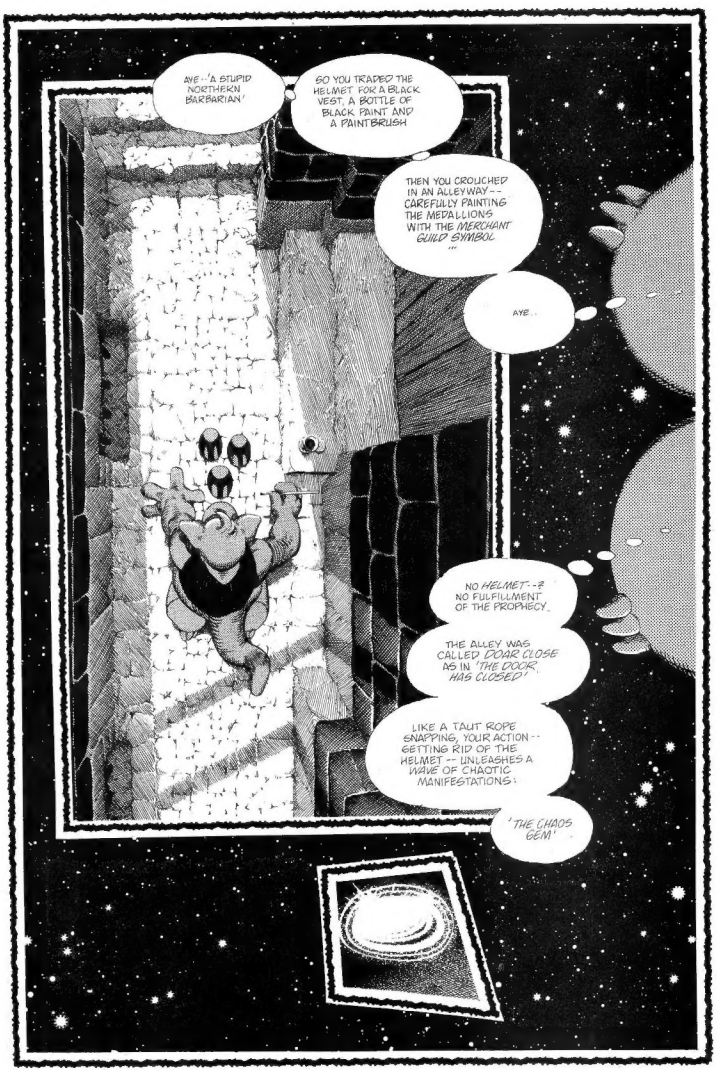
EVERYBODY
QUITE A SHOCK.


AYE--A STUPID NORTHERN BARBARIAN!
SO YOU TRADED THE HELMET FOR A BLACK VEST, A BOTTLE OF BLACK PAINT AND A PAINTBRUSH
THEN YOU CROUCHED IN AN ALLEYWAY -- CAREFULLY PAINTING THE MEDALLIONS WITH THE MERCHANT GUILD SYMBOL ...
AYE..
NO HELMET--? NO FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHECY.
THE ALLEY WAS CALLED DOAR CLOSE AS IN 'THE DOOR HAS CLOSED'
LIKE A TAUT ROPE SNAPPING, YOUR ACTION -- GETTING RID OF THE HELMET -- UNLEASHES A WAVE OF CHAOTIC MANIFESTATIONS:
'THE CHAOS GEM'

'THE CRAWLER'-- MISSHAPEN AND RAVENOUS -- A MANIFESTATION OF THE AIMLESS, PLODDING FUTURE BEFORE YOU
THE 'LAST RULER OF A DYING RACE' -- A BUMBLING, YET ARROGANT BUFFOON.
A MANIFESTATION OF YOUR SELF-DECEPTION, INCOMPETENCE AND BLUSTER
TURG, THE IGNORANT NORTHERN BARBARIAN YOU WOULD ALWAYS BE.
'THE BROTHERS OF THE BLACK SUN'
A DISPLACED TRIBE OF HERETICAL PICTS...
THEIR INSIGNIA: A STYLISED, INVERTED AARDVARK HEAD
MANIFESTATION OF YOUR DESTINY TURNED UPSIDE-DOWN.
RAHEL CERTAINLY WAS CLINGING TO HER MANIFESTATION OF THE 'ACCLIVITY-EARTH' WITH GREAT TENACITY. I DON'T KNOW IF IT WOULD BE ANY GOOD REASONING WITH HER ABOUT THE MATTER AT THIS POINT. I WON'T...